

How The Papacy Came To Power



Pope Pius XII, Pontifex Maximus of the Roman Catholic Church wearing his bejeweled tiara or triple crown, symbolizing his claim to be the father of princes and kings, ruler of the world and vicar of Jesus Christ.

By L. H. Lehmann

Introduction: This article is from a PDF file on LutheranLibrary.org. It was published by The Converted Catholic Magazine and edited by Leo Herbert Lehmann. It's one of the best and clearest accounts of Roman Catholic history that I've ever read.

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? ...And Him shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming:

“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and lying wonders,

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” – 2 Thessalonians 2:5-10

Much of the mystery of the spectacular power of the church of Rome can be explained by knowing its true nature and origins. To explain fully about these would take more space than we can afford. In two short articles, however, we hope to supply enough to whet the appetite of those who want to study further to find a satisfactory answer to all the questions involved. In such short articles we prefer the factual to the prophetic approach to the problem of the Roman Papacy. Following is the first of this series of two articles: [Both articles are included –Ed.]

THE WHOLE STRUCTURE of the Roman Catholic church is rooted in the fact that it is the legal successor of the old Roman empire of the Caesars. By its union with the Roman State, the church of Rome partook of its policy – world conquest by force of arms. Just as the old Roman empire was the universal dominating power of the then known world with its central seat of government in Rome, so the church of Rome was declared to be the universal church and “Mother of Christendom,” and the Bishop of Rome soon became the King of Bishops. Likewise, since the authority of Rome was the universal law of all nations, so the law of the church of Rome became the universal and authoritarian law for all the churches of Christendom.

Romanization Of The Christian Church

But the church of Rome not only carried forward the policy, authority and law of the old Roman empire; **it also absorbed the beliefs, the ritual and the institutions of the religion of pagan Rome.** Whatever may have been the hopes to the contrary, the union of the church of Rome with the Roman State did not Christianize the State; instead it Romanized the Christian church, leaving to it in the end little more than the mere label of Christian. Contrary to the belief of most people today, the pagan Romans did not in effect become Christians after the Emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the State religion of Rome. They became Christians in name, but incorporated their former officers, rites, ceremonies, festivals and doctrines into the church of Rome. With some slight changes in the old heathen traditions, the Christian religion in Rome became identical with the pagan religion of ancient Rome. Roman Catholic apologists today do not attempt to conceal this. They even boast of the fact that Roman Catholicism veered away from primitive Christianity and has not only borrowed its dogmas, morals, laws and worship from pagan religions in the past, but will continue to do so in the centuries to come. Dr. Karl Adam, Roman Catholic priest-professor at the University of Tuebingen, Germany, for instance, in his authoritative Catholic work, *The Spirit of Catholicism*,¹ frankly declares:

“We Catholics acknowledge readily, without any shame, nay with pride, that Catholicism cannot be identified simply and wholly with primitive Christianity, nor even with the Gospel of Christ, in the same way that the great oak cannot be identified with the tiny acorn. There is no mechanical identity, but on organic identity. And we go further and say that thousands of years hence Catholicism will probably be even richer, more luxuriant, more manifold in dogma, morals, law and worship, than the Catholicism of the present day. A religious historian of the fifth millennium A.D. will without difficulty discover in Catholicism conceptions and forms and practices which will derive from India, China and Japan, and he will have to recognize a far more obvious ‘complex of opposites.’”

To what extent the rites, beliefs, worship and customs of Roman paganism were taken into the church of Rome may be seen from the following:

1. The 'Pontifex Maximus'

The high priest of ancient Rome, the *Pontifex Maximus* surrounded by his senate of seventy *flamines*, became the Pope, with the same title of *Pontifex Maximus* (which he retains to this day) and his college of seventy cardinals. Just as the distinguishing sign of the pagan *flamen* was a hat, so the distinguishing sign of a Roman cardinal to this day is a hat. The tiara of the pagan high priest of Rome also became the head-dress of the Pope. The *lituus* of the Roman augurs became the crosier or pastoral staff of the Pope and bishops of the church of Rome. When Julius Caesar became the high priest or *Pontifex Maximus*, he compelled Pompey to kiss his foot, a custom followed, also by his successors Caligula and Heliogabulus. The Popes also took over the custom.



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The custom of paying abject reverence to the Pope and hierarchy of the Roman church has an even more ancient origin. It originated with the Egyptians who deified and worshipped monkeys. It was an artful and refined stroke of policy on the part of the Egyptians to single out so ridiculous an animal as a monkey for reverence and deification, and it suited the policy of the priesthood of both the pagan religion in Rome and its 'Christian' successor to rationalize and apply like reverence and deification to the Roman Pontifex. The Egyptians did so to show that even the most despicable person was entitled to reverence and worship, not because of any intrinsic worth in the person himself, but because of the high office conferred upon him. Thus, Roman Catholic apologists today, when faced with the objection that so many Popes were arch-criminals, murderers, adulterers, even unbelievers, answer by saying that it is the high office that elevates a man, and that the man himself does not either enhance or degrade his office. The Knights of Columbus' magazine *Columbia* (which claims to be "the largest Catholic magazine in the world"), in its issue for August 1938, dramatically explains how the power of the Roman priest depends solely on the legal authorization of his office, and has nothing to do with the man himself, his morals or his beliefs, as follows:

"A priest's existence would be justified if he never did anything but give us the infinite boon of the Mass. If he said it on an old crate in a ramshackle barn, in the most barbarous Latin, with no music but the cackling of hens and the mooing of cows; If he paused after the gospel to preach the purest balderdash, mingled with constant appeals and demands for money, or the dullest observations on the weather; if he were ugly, ignorant, dirty, tactless, profane, greedy, cantankerous, intolerant, even immoral – if all these conditions existed, and the man was properly authorized to say Mass, and said it, he would be conferring on his parishioners a favor so great that they ought to be glad to crawl for miles on hands and knees, if necessary, to receive it."



The Pope's tiara – made of cloth of gold and comprises 3 crowns with 232 pearls, 220 diamonds, 32 rubies, 18 emeralds and 11 sapphires.



A LARGE PANCAKE HAT SYMBOLIZES THE POWER OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY SURROUNDING THE POPE AS IT DID THE POWER OF THE 'FLAMINES' ATTACHED TO THE 'PONTIFEX MAXIMUS' OF THE PAGAN RELIGION OF ROME.

2. The Mass And Other Rituals

The victim of the Roman pagan ritual became the daily "Sacrifice of the Mass" in the Roman Catholic church. The circular consecrated wafer used by Roman priests to this day is identical with the round consecrated cakes used by the ancient Romans – and farther back by all the Oriental religions – as a symbol of the Sun-God. When exposed in the "monstrance" at Benediction service in a Roman Catholic church, the **rays of the sun may be seen surrounding the circular wafer**. The candles kept constantly burning in Roman Catholic churches are similar to the fires constantly replenished in the sanctuary of Jupiter Ammon in the Capitol in Rome and in the temple of Hercules at Tyre.

The "Holy Water" or *aspersio*, and the incense used in ancient Roman temples were taken over completely and have remained without alteration in the church of Rome.

The long list of patron saints in the Roman Catholic church, with their alleged power over every possible contingency in the life of man, are but the Roman *Divi*, the minor tutelary gods invented by the ancient Romans to protect the various vocations of men. Their names alone were changed. Likewise the deification of a Roman hero became the canonization of a saint. The ancient monuments and statues of the Goddess of the Year nursing the good Day, and the pictures of Isis giving suck to the boy Horus, were also reproduced by the church of Rome in the statues and pictures that abound in Roman Catholic churches of the Madonna and Child. In these it can be seen that the Virgin's head is circled by a crescent light and the child's by luminous rays, the former symbolizing the new moon sacred to Isis, and the latter the sun of which Horus was the offspring.

Clearer of all is the identification of the Goddess Venus with the Virgin Mary. The title of both. "Queen of Heaven," is the same.

3. Cult Of The Dead And Other Corruptions

The Roman art of governing has always been dictatorial and laid particular stress on plans for the subjection of the people, which is clearly evident to this day in the Roman Catholic church. **Fear of death and the contemplation of the gruesome contents of the grave have thus always played an important part in the ritual of both the ancient religion of Rome and the religion of the Popes.** Public and spectacular interment of the dead was compelled by law in ancient Rome, and this has been carried on in the solemn and pompous funeral rites in the church of Rome to this day. Common to the ancient Egyptians, Romans and the Catholic church today is the teaching that the deceased cannot obtain eternal rest in the next world without the help of funeral rites and prayers.

The **Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory** stems from the teaching of the philosophers of Alexandria that there is a fire in which the souls of men after death must be purified. This doctrine of Purgatory was added to the list of dogmas, binding under pain of eternal damnation, at the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215.

The mendicant monks or "begging friars" of the Roman Catholic church are the lineal descendants of the lazy pagan priests of heathen Rome against whom Cicero protested in his *Book of Laws*. He described them as traveling from house to house with sacks on their backs, and which they filled with eatables given by their superstitious hosts.

The church of Rome also fixed the birthday of Jesus Christ to coincide with the birthday of the **Sun-God Mithra on December 25**. Likewise the observation of the Sabbath or seventh day of the week (Saturday) as commanded by the fourth commandment of God, was changed by the church of Rome to Sunday, the first day of the week, which the ancient Romans named after and dedicated to their great Sun-God Sol.



The Pope's gardens in Rome.



Inside the Vatican

Cardinal Newman recorded for posterity his insight into the way in which the true teaching of Christ was covered over with the paganism of old Rome by the Roman Catholic church. In one of his *Tracts for the Times*, written in 1883, he declared:

“The spirit of old Rome has risen again in its former place, and has evidenced its identity by its works. It has possessed the Church there planted, as an evil spirit might seize the demoniacs of primitive times, and makes her speak words which are not her own. In the corrupt papal system we have the very cruelty, the craft and the ambition of the [Roman] Republic; its cruelty in its unsparing sacrifice of the happiness and virtue of individuals to a phantom of public expediency, in its forced celibacy within, and its persecutions without; Its craft in its falsehoods, its deceitful deeds and lying wonders; and its grasping ambition in the very structure of its polity, in its assumption of universal dominion: old Rome is still alive; nowhere have its eagles lighted, but it still claims the sovereignty under another pretense. The Roman church I will not blame, but pity – she is, as I have said, spell-bound, as if by an evil spirit; she is in thralldom.”

(How this Romanizing of Christianity was made the groundwork of the dicta-

torial power of the church of Rome in both religious and political affairs, as we see it today, will be explained in a second article in next month's issue.) [Included below -Ed]



Above picture, from the Catholic Brooklyn Tablet, of November 3, 1913, falsely shows the priest as 'Alter Christus,' 'Another Christ.'

Rise Of The Power Of The Priesthood

Instead of filling the earth with light and joy, according to the express declaration of Christ that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, **the church of Rome soon after its union with the Roman State began to teach that the present life is to be given over to the preparation of the soul for death, under the exclusive direction of the Roman Catholic priesthood.** The power of the world was thus placed in the hands of the hierarchy of the Church of Rome.

Protestant Americans, in seeking to determine the secret of the power of the Roman Catholic church, focus all their attention on the political and social activities of its organization. Because of their love of religious toleration, they avoid investigation into its religious aspect and thus

arrive at a very one-sided view of the whole Catholic question. They fail to realize that **the religious teaching of the church of Rome is the pivot** on which its whole organization revolves. Were it not for their submission to the spiritual power of their priests, Roman Catholic people would never become blindly obedient followers of their church's secular policies. It is easy to see that, even in a democratic country like the United States, **if millions of people are made dependent upon men for forgiveness of their sins and for their hope of eternal happiness after death, those millions will tend to accept without question what their priests and bishops plan in political and social matters.**

The power of the Roman priesthood therefore is rooted in the conviction of the people that they cannot get to heaven without the ministrations of their priests.

It was the universal establishment of this spiritual power in the hands of bishops and priests that made the church of Rome absolute dictator even in politics soon after its union with the Roman State. The power of the Emperor over the bodies of men and the power of the Pope over their souls were fused into a dual sovereignty – with the power of the Pope superior to that of the Emperor, since the things of the soul are believed to be far superior to those of the body. Thus **the Pope was likened to the sun and the Emperor to the moon**, and, it was argued and accepted, that “since the earth is seven times greater than the moon, and the sun eight times greater than the earth, so the Pope's authority is fifty-six times greater than the power of the Emperor and all State authority.”

This contest for power between the Pope and the Emperor came to a head in the year 730 over the worship of images. The Emperor forbade their worship as idolatrous, but the Pope opposed him and aroused Rome and Italy to a successful rebellion against him. As a result of the Pope's victory the Romans saluted him as their lord and took an oath of allegiance to him as their supreme ruler.

“Donation Of Constantine”

Soon afterwards, about the middle of the eighth century, the document known as “The Donation of Constantine The Great to the Roman Church” was forged. It alleged that the Emperor Constantine conferred upon Saints Peter and Paul the imperial rights, all of Central Italy (which later became the Papal States), the lands of Judea, Greece, Thrace, Asia and Africa and various islands in the Mediterranean to be disposed of by Pope Sylvester and his successors forever.²

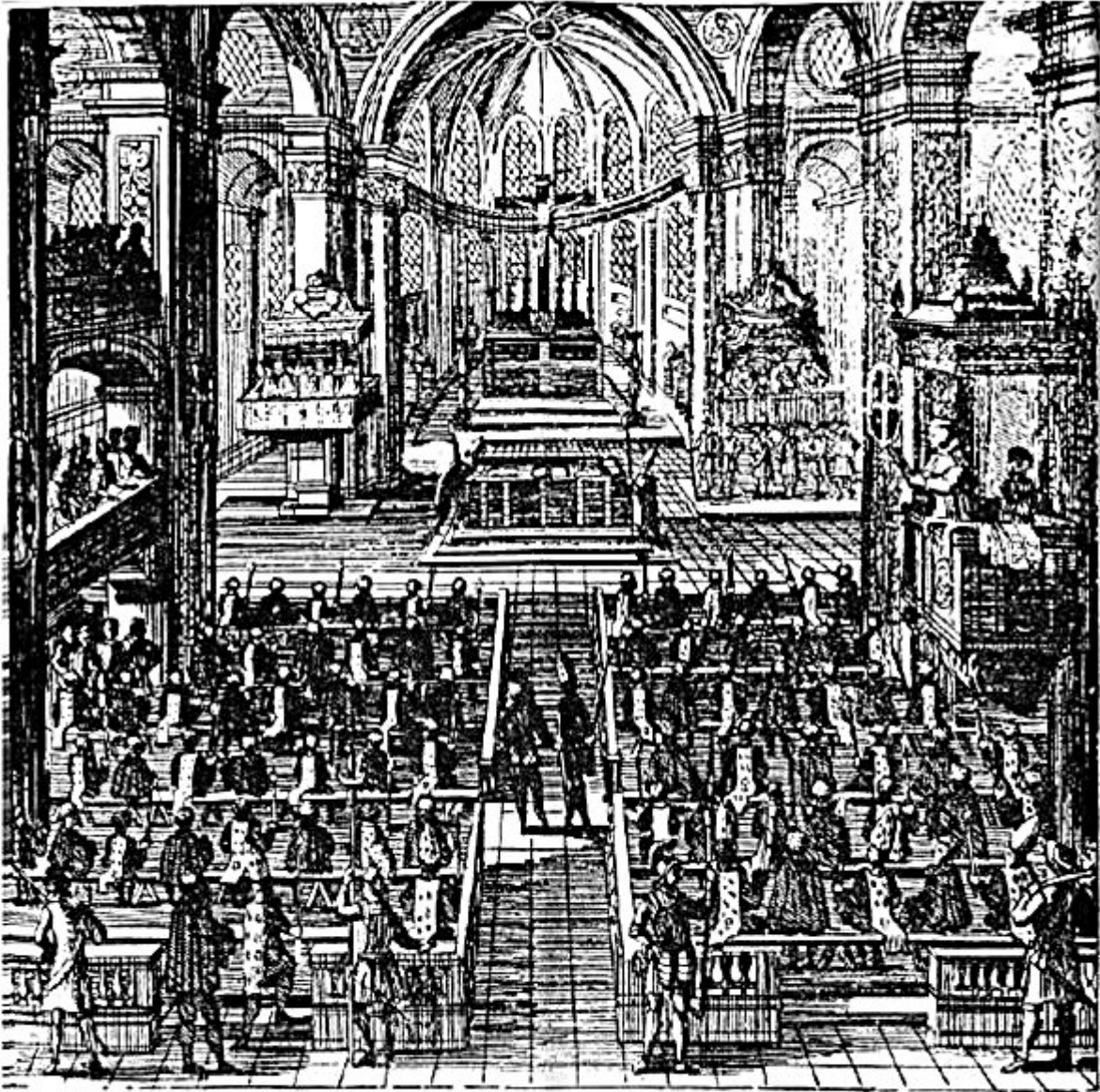
With the equally notorious “Decretals of Isidore” which purported to substantiate the forgery, this document was used and believed for over a thousand years to sustain the absolute dictatorship of the Popes of Rome, in political as well as religious matters, over the nations of Europe. Because of the undeniable refutation of these claims by Protestant scholars, the best Roman Catholic historians were finally forced to admit that the “Donation of Constantine” was a forgery and the “Isidorean Decretals” utterly false. Yet,

to this day, the whole foundation of the Roman papacy's temporal dominion rests upon these two admittedly false props.

Origin Of The Inquisition

Like everything else in the Roman church, its fearful Inquisition laws were taken over from the pagan religion of ancient Rome, where they existed for the repression and punishment of dissidents from the national creed. They continued right down to the last century even in our own Western Hemisphere, when the official Inquisition of the Roman church in Mexico was abolished in 1816. It was enforced in Spain even after that date. But the Inquisition arose again in our time in Rome and throughout Europe under the form of the Fascist *Ovra* and the Nazi Gestapo, which functioned as repressive instruments against all dissidents who dared express opposition to the united authority of State and Church. Himmler, speaking for Hitler in his latest proclamation last November 13, fulminated his desperate threats against all free, democratic "parties, petty parties, groups, estates, vocations, organizations, classes and finally those religious confessions most likely to derive benefit from our internal disunity.."

The Pope signed a solemn concordat with the Nazi regime less than six months after it came to power.



**PRISONERS OF THE INQUISITION IN THE CHURCH OF SAINT FRANCIS AT GOA
DURING AN AUTO-DA-FÉ**

(From Dellon's 'Relation de l'Inquisition de Goa,' 1688)

As early as 529, the Justinian Code made it a crime to believe or speak in any way against the teaching of the church of Rome, and all who did so were condemned as heretics. Both Emperors Theodosius and Justinian appointed officials called "Inquisitors" whose special duty it was to ferret out and prosecute such offenders. So much did the religion of the church of Rome become a part of the law of the Empire, that the bishop or his representative sat side by side with the civil judge on the bench in court. There was no crime in the civil court calendar that did not include a breach also of the laws of the church. In the later Middle Ages, the civil power yielded complete jurisdiction in Inquisitorial cases to the bishops, the victims to be handed over to the 'secular arm' for execution or other punishment.

In this way the policy of the church of Rome became in every way similar to that of the Roman State – the subjection of the whole world to its spiritual and temporal dominion. Faith and holiness were made secondary to its quest for authority and power. Its primary aim was no longer to save souls, but to

gather the whole human race under the sceptre of Rome. Blinded by lust for absolute world-dominion, the Roman church (like its imitators and co-partners, the Axis dictators in our day) was forced to use the cruel weapon of the Inquisition in its attempt to attain it. It was a machine for inquiring into a man's thoughts and beliefs, and for burning him if they were not in accord with the external beliefs and rites of the church. It arrested on suspicion, tortured the victim till he confessed, and then punished with fire. Even as late as the sixteenth century, when the Church of Rome was faced with the rising tide of protest from within its own membership, it did not change its way. Given a chance to reform, it chose to continue, as it does to this day, in pursuing its aim for world dominion. H. G. Wells, in his latest book, *Crux Ansata* (p. 50), has the following to say on this point:

“By the dawn of the sixteenth century, the Church, blindly and rashly, had come to the parting of the ways. The force of protest, that is to say of Protestantism, was gathering against it, and the alternatives, whether it would modernize or whether it would dogmatize and fight, were before it. It chose to fight and tyrannize.”

But like the modern Axis dictators, the church of Rome will find from now on that ruthless persecution of dissent from its reactionary creed is not an effective weapon to subdue the enlightened will of the masses.



The Inquisition in Goa India.

Betrayal Of The Christian Idea

The thrust of the church of Rome for world-power, as could be expected, destroyed the bond that joined all true Christian believers together in the Christian Church, and all of them together, in turn, with Christ as its head.

That real bond of unity was a living faith in the heart of every believer. In the days of the Apostles, the invisible and spiritual church was identical with the visible and outward community. But after the union of the church of Rome with the Roman State, the outward shell of an external, authoritarian organization was substituted for the internal and spiritual unity which alone makes for religion proceeding from God. Faith in the heart no longer knit together the members of the church of Rome and its dependent churches throughout Christendom. Fanciful ties were instituted – bishops, archbishops, popes, miters, elaborate rites and ceremonies, and intricacies of canon law. These built up a huge, spectacular organization of laws, dogmas and external pomp, cemented together by cruel repression, fear and superstition. On one side there arose a priestly caste that usurped the name of Christian church and claimed peculiar privileges in the sight of the Lord. On the other side were the timid and fearful masses of the people reduced to a blind and passive submission, gagged, silenced and delivered over to a proud caste of all-powerful priests. **Jesus Christ had come on earth to free all men and make them sons of God; the Roman church in time made them slaves of men.**

What Of Salvation?

Again we must return to the religious aspect of the church of Rome. Not only is its power based upon its peculiar teaching about salvation of men's souls, but, as to be expected, its lust for that power destroyed the true saving principle of salvation in Christian teaching. That great principle is that grace – eternal pardon – is a free gift of God. "By grace are ye saved through faith," St. Paul tells us (Eph. 2:8)... "it is the gift of God." **The church of Rome, in order to sustain its human organization, soon invented its very profitable dogmatic teaching that the sinner can only be saved by works,** by outward conformance to its network of man-made laws, legal observances and penances.

According to true Christian teaching, on the other hand, the disciple is saved by apprehending Christ through faith, by means of which Christ becomes all filings to the disciple. He receives from Christ a new life, a life of divine power that regenerates him and sets him free from the power of self, sin and of human tyranny. The Roman church has taken the power of salvation out of the hands of God and placed it in the hands of its priests who barter it for works of penances, indulgences, and money payments. It boldly asserts that the Roman Catholic priest is the mediator between the sinner and God, and claims that this priest has the power to forgive sins and to offer sacrifice for the sins of men.

The result of all this is an amazing mixture in priests and people of the Roman church of ambition and devotedness, of superstition and piety, of cunning and zeal; a mixture of a theoretical belief in absolute ethical values on the one hand, and at the same time provision for their destruction on the other. It thus becomes a mere counterfeit of the good. Those who hold that it is Satan's work have much to substantiate their charge. For it is difficult to see how the human mind alone could have conceived what the Roman church essentially and actually is – a clever contrivance to sustain in unrighteousness the semblance of truth.

1. p. 2. This work was published in English by The Macmillan Co. in New York in 1928, and bears the Nihil obstat of the Board of Censors of the Archdiocese of New York and the Imprimatur of the late Cardinal Hayes.↵
2. The alleged disposition of these lands by Constantine is not without significance in regard to Mussolini's disastrous attempt to reestablish them as part of a revived Roman Empire in alliance with the Pope in 1929.↵